

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 SSO-00 INRE-00 MCT-01 HA-05 SY-05 EUR-12
/104 W

-----014292 040645Z /16

R 032223Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0817
INFO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 3882

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, ASEC, GT
SUBJECT: PRIEST ASSASSINATED

1. FATHER HERMOGENES LOPEZ, PARISH PRIEST OF SAN JOSE
PINULA, RURAL COMMUNITY SEVERAL MINUTES DRIVE FROM
CAPITAL, WAS AMBUSHED AND SHOT JUNE 30 WHILE DRIVING ALONE.

2. GENERAL ASSUMPTION IS THAT PRIEST'S MURDER WAS POLITICAL.
FATHER HERMOGENES, A GUATEMALAN NATIONAL, HAD BEEN
EXTREMELY ACTIVE IN SOCIAL ISSUES, HAVING LED PROTESTS
AGAINST SCHEME BY LOCAL BUSINESS GROUP TO DIVERT WATER
FROM HIS PARISH TO METROPOLITAN CONSUMERS; AGAINST LOCAL
DAIRYMEN'S ATTEMPTS TO RAISE MILK PRICES; AND AGAINST
ARMY CONSCRIPTION PRACTICES. ONLY SEVERAL DAYS BEFORE
DEATH, FATHER HERMOGENES IN PAID NEWSPAPER AD ASKED
THEN-PRESIDENT LAUGERUD TO ABOLISH THE ARMY. HE WILL
ALSO BE REMEMBERED AS THE PRIEST WHO BROADCAST ACCUSA-
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TION THAT PL 430 FOODSTUFFS ARE DOCTORED TO CAUSE
STERILITY.

3. COMMENT. DEATH HAS EVOKED WIDE PUBLIC OUTCRY
SECOND ONLY TO PANZOS EPISODE WITH WHICH
IT IS SURE TO BE LINKED IN THE FUTURE. BARRING
UNSOLVED PLANE CRASH DEATH OF MARYKNOLL FATHER WOODS

IN 1976, THIS IS FIRST ASSASSINATION ANYONE CAN RECALL
OF A PRIEST IN GUATEMALA. LEFTIST GROUPS, INCLUDING
THE CHURCH-RELATED PRO-JUSTICE AND PEACE COMMITTEE, ARE
ALREADY LINKING THE EVENT TO ILL-CONSIDERED POST-PANZOS
STATEMENTS OF DEFENSE AND GOVERNMENT MINISTERS BLAMING
CHURCHMEN FOR SOCIAL AGITATION. FROM OUR PERSPECTIVE, WE
FIND IT DIFFICULT TO CONCEIVE THAT GOG, HOWEVER
MALIGNANT ITS MOTIVES, WOULD CHOOSE PRESIDENTIAL
INAUGURATION PERIOD FOR SUCH A POTENTIALLY INCENDIARY
ACTION.
BOSTER

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Message Attributes

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